

Invented in Massachusetts but perfected in Indiana. Many enthusiastic fans would consider this an accurate description of basketball in our state. The fiery passion for the sport was observed by the game's inventor, James Naismith, when he visited for a tournament in 1925. Since that time, Indiana has consistently been a prime producer of top basketball talent in the country. Terre Haute has been lucky enough to see some of those greats grace its venues with their above par abilities. This exhibition imagines how the ultimate "dream team" of those great local players would look.

Larry Bird – (power forward)

6'9" 220 lbs

Larry Bird was from West Baden Springs where he grew up in poverty. Bird used basketball as an escape. He was an exceptional player during his time at Springs Valley High School. By college, he passed up the opportunity to attend IU and instead graced Indiana State University with his prowess on the court. During the 1978-1979 season, Bird led the ISU Sycamores to an undefeated season and all the way to the final game of the NCAA tournament where they lost to Magic Johnson and Michigan State. He excelled in his NBA career with the Boston Celtics, setting multiple records and leading them to 3 Championships. He brought his talents back to Indiana as head coach of the Pacers whom he led to a record 58-24 season. Bird still holds an advisory role with the Pacers.

Terry Dischinger – (small forward)

6'7" 189 lbs

Terry Dischinger was a stand-out player and leader of the Garfield Purple Eagles in the late 1950s. As a Purdue Boilermaker, Dischinger set many records for both Purdue and the Big Ten Conference. He was part of the legendary 1960 Olympic team which included NBA legends Oscar Robertson and Jerry West. In 1962, Dischinger was drafted to the NBA to play for the Chicago Zephyrs (modern-day Washington Wizards). During his rookie year, Dischinger still continued his education and received a degree in Chemical Engineering from Purdue. His career was interrupted from 1965-1967 for military service which was "bad for" his career but it was during his stationing in Hawaii that he decided his true passion was dentistry. After retiring from the NBA in 1973, Dischinger started an orthodontics practice in Portland, Oregon.

Brian Evans – (center)

6'9" 234 lbs

Brian Evans, a Terre Haute native, was a fierce rebounder and defender during his time at Terre Haute South in the early 1990s. During his senior year, he averaged 22.5 points and he led his team to the state semifinals. His talents on the court were noted by the legendary IU coach Bobby Knight under whom Evans played for 4 years. Evans' college career took a slow start but by his junior year he led the IU Hoosiers to a 19-12 record and an NCAA appearance. He was named the 1996 Big Ten Player of the Year. Later the same year, he was drafted into the NBA in the first round as the 27th overall pick. While he was initially plagued by injuries, he eventually had a successful professional career overseas.

Nate Mills – (shooting guard)

6'1" (weight unknown)

Nate Mills escalated the Terre Haute North Patriots to two sectional championships and a regional title by the time he graduated in 1974. In the first season of North Patriot basketball history, the media had already deemed Mills the "super sophomore." He still holds the school record for points scored, sinking buckets to the tune of 1,643 points. Mills was also talented on the baseball diamond, a star pitcher and outfielder for the North Patriots. It was a career in basketball, though, which he ultimately pursued. He played at the University of New Orleans on a basketball scholarship where he averaged 14.1 points per game over 4 years. He later played professionally in France. In a 2016 ceremony, Nate Mills' jersey, #34, was retired by the Terre Haute North Patriots.

Maynard Lewis – (point guard)

6'1" 187

Maynard Lewis was born in Terre Haute which he still calls his home. Like Slick Leonard from a bygone era, Lewis was basketball-obsessed since he hit the hard wood at the Boys and Girls Club. His name is synonymous with Terre Haute South basketball. He still holds South's record for scoring, firing off 1,632 points with the Braves over 4 seasons. In the 1997-1998 season, he averaged 25.3 points and 6.7 rebounds per game. After graduating in 1998, he went to play with the Purdue Boilermakers. While he averaged 6.7 points per game, he played important roles off the bench in several games. At 42 years of age, Maynard Lewis was recently nominated to the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame. Lewis is currently serving as head coach of the Terre Haute South Braves.

Bobby 'Slick' Leonard – Head coach

Bob Leonard was a stand-out player at Gerstmeyer High School in the late 1940s. In college, Leonard was part of the IU Hoosiers 1953 NCAA Championship team. He was drafted to the NBA by the Minneapolis Lakers in 1954 and later played for the Chicago Zephyrs. It was in coaching, though, that Leonard excelled. In 1968, he took over as head coach of the ABA's Indiana Pacers, a team he led to 3 ABA championships and 529 wins. The number 529 has been retired by the Pacers in honor of his revival of Pacers basketball. After his retirement in the late 1970s, Leonard eventually came back to the Pacers as a color commentator where he was famous for his excited utterance, "Boom Baby!" He passed away on April 13, 2021.